

The Ford International Weekly THE DEARBORN INDEPENDENT

By the
Year One Dollar

Dearborn, Michigan, June 19, 1920

Single
Copy Five Cents

The Tree That Is Drying Up

ONE convention has passed, and every vote that was cast in any primary with a view to directing the action of that convention was disregarded by the party managers. The primaries were a sop to the voters, the convention a sop to the party, the result was just what six or seven men wanted it to be.

There never was such an absolutely "managed" convention as that which adjourned at Chicago on the sweltering night of June 12. Most humiliating of all to honest Republicans is the fact that the convention was managed by outsiders—financiers whom no convention would elect as tally clerk, runners from the "big interests" who manage the Democratic party, and certain fat men who sent their orders by special wire from seaside resorts.

If anything were needed to confirm the suspicion, now of long standing, that party fealty doesn't matter any more, because both parties are controlled by the same upper groups and for the same purpose, that confirmation was given by the manner in which this convention openly—openly!—permitted and availed itself of the services on the spot of financiers and Democrats.

The nominee is a man who was and still is practically unknown to the people. He was unheralded in the primaries, and was scarcely announced in the convention itself. These would almost mark him a man of destiny, were it not for other facts. Never has his word on a single public affair been heard by the whole nation; never even for an instant has he flashed before the public eye in the pose of masterful leadership; never on moral or economic issue has he taken an attitude that marked him out a man of conscientious independence. He has always been "icily regular, splendidly null." His selection must be the theme of strange thoughts by the discarded candidates—Wood and Lowden.

The fate of General Wood and Governor Lowden illustrates the power of public opinion to prevent but not to initiate. The disclosures of lavish expenditures of money in the campaigns of these candidates roused a public sentiment against them which even the convention bosses, it seems, could not disregard. But there the power of public opinion stopped. It could prevent a nomination, it could not force one. And so it was perfectly easy for the bosses to trot out the inoffensive Senator Harding. It was a good move for the managers, too. For now they owe no one anything on Harding's behalf. The money was spent and the promises were made on Wood and Lowden. The bosses simply put Harding over clean; no one but themselves has any strings on him! One bright spot may be found, however: it is the selection of Calvin A. Coolidge for Vice President.

On vital issues the declarations of the convention come as near zero as is consistent with having a legible platform at all. The sap seems to have dried up in that sturdy tree which grew up Under The Oaks at Jackson. Penrose and Lodge, financiers of the upper group of would-be world rulers, bi-partisan tricksters who write planks for the platforms of all the parties—and get them adopted too!—these are the men who have ringed the old tree, until it stands as if dying.

The next session of this national farce will be called at San Francisco. No one can say that Senator Harding will be the next President of the United States until it is seen what San Francisco does. Two weeks before the Chicago convention anyone would have said offhand that the Republican nominee would be the next President. That statement is hardly made now, and where it is made, the certainty has gone out of it.



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